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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 002509

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [IZ](#) [UN](#)

SUBJECT: CHARGE MEETING WITH UNAMI SRSG QAZI: SUNNI OUTREACH

REF: BAGHDAD 2480

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires James F. Jeffrey for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Charge had a long one-on-one exchange with UNAMI SRSG, Ambassador Ashraf Qazi, on June 14. The main subject was aspects of Sunni outreach, both the immediate problem and the longer-term aspects of the Sunni insurgency. Charge explained our position on the Constitutional Commission in considerable detail, urging Qazi to support, including the total of 17 Sunni Arab members in an expanded Commission. Qazi played his cards close to his chest, but indicated he would meet later today with Sunni leaders and suggested that he would try to be helpful. He did not challenge the premises of our position.

2. (C) Qazi did go on at length about the difficulties dealing with the Sunnis here, and their failure to recognize that they are facing a fundamentally changed Iraq. He appears to think highly of many of the Shia political leaders, and compares the Sunnis with the Muslim population of South Asia, which simply could not grasp that they were no longer the ruling class--until the denouement of the Pakistan-India split. Still, he lamented that no Shia leader, including the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, has won the mantle of "spokesperson for the entire population," a problem that haunted Gandhi as well.

3. (C) Obviously fishing for concessions for the Sunnis, Qazi asked about MNF-I accepting a "timeline" for withdrawal. Charge explained in detail why this was tantamount to declaring us an illegal occupation, would lose the point that Coalition forces are in Iraq for a purpose, and would demoralize our allies. We were ready to agree to a gradual pullback of forces as part of a condition-based strategy; as those goals for which we are fighting would be achieved, such as standup of Iraqi forces and/or a drop in levels of violence, we could carry such a strategy out.

4. (C) Qazi kept coming back to the "timetable" idea (COMMENT: In fairness, it is much loved by Sunni Arabs of all stripes. Kurds hate the idea, and the Shia are torn between their minds--keep the Coalition here, and their hearts--out with the foreigners. END COMMENT) He asked if there were some way to "meld" both a timetable and a set of conditions. Charge pointed out that this would only be a disguised timetable, that all including American citizens would see through immediately.

5. (C) COMMENT: There is no telling what Qazi will discuss with the Sunni Arabs, but he is well disposed towards us and goes into any Middle Eastern negotiation or debate with his eyes wide open. He is feeling some heat from New York, as he complained in particular of the strong ties that senior UN officials Brahimi and Benomar still maintain with Iraqi figures. END COMMENT  
Jeffrey